Books — and Authors

TO BE CONTINUED

DURELL NOVEL REAL INTRIGUE

By HARRISON SMITH

LAWRENCE DURRELL'S fascinating "Mountolive"—the third volume of a tetralogy—is a sensual novel centered in the complex world of the Near East, beginning during the first decade of this century. The author, an Irish poet and novelist born in India and educated in England, has been a foreign service press officer in Athens and Egypt. It is safe to say that no novelist in England or America has produced in recent times so startling and intricate a drama as the kaleidoscopic story that began in "Justine," was furthered in "Balthazar," and now continues in "Mountolive."

When the present volume opens, David Mountolive is a minor English diplomat in Belgrade, who, by virtue of his knowledge of Oriental languages, has finally won a long-denied post in Alexandria. For many years he has longed for Leila, a beautiful and talented Egyptian woman whom he met and loved in his youth, when he was near Alexandria. At that time had spent months in the same household with Leila, her dying husband and her two grown sons. When he is appointed Ambassador to Egypt, the family becomes an integral part of his life.

LAWRENCE DURELL
. . . more to come

Confronted with a non-European civilization, David has to deal with Moslems, Jews, Copts and Egyptians, and try to achieve what balance he can between the ancient rivalries of Eastern nations and Israel, now struggling for independence. His associates are a strange collection of men, far removed from any British conception of how an ambassador's staff should behave: in spite of his efforts, Mountolive's aides disintegrate from too much strong drink and too many young prostitutes.

Permeated with political intrigue, sex and conspiracies, Alexandria becomes a centre of danger, and David discovers that the masters are the servants of the forces they have set into play.

The reader must wait for the fourth volume to continue with the characters, the muted passion and vitality, of this remarkable story. There can be no question that Lawrence Durrell is unique among writers of our day. And certainly no other novel has a hero who in any way resembles that astonishing character David Mountolive.

"Come right in, folks—the poetry reading is just about to start."

THE AMERICAN COLLECTOR

Vast Sums Spent On 'Vulgar Tripe'

WEALTH AND GOOD TASTE do not necessarily go hand in hand, a fact made quite dramatically evident in many of the huge private art collections assembled by American tycoons.

The collectors were much more colorful, in a number of cases, than the dreadful paintings and sculpture they gathered together after the expenditure of millions of dollars. Others, however, had superb taste as well as money and purchased works of genuine merit as art.

Their story, which is also a study of the range of taste in America, is told with wit and scholarship by Aline B. Saarinen in her book, **The Proud Possessors** (Random House).

Aptly subtitled "The Lives, Times and Tastes of Some Adventurous American Art Collectors," this lively volume itself is a gallery of unusual and eccentric individuals who, in toto, contributed much to the artistic inheritance of our museums and the American people.

Written with an affectionate elan for the subject, Mrs. Saarinen's study stood out prominently among books being most widely read and enjoyed last week.

The level of taste in American collecting is very uneven with many more lows than highs. It is sad to contemplate the vast sums that were invested in vulgar tripe that resembled art only because it was paint on canvas and enclosed in an ostentatious gilt frame.

On the other hand there were men like the elder Pierpont Morgan who combined a virile individual taste that was aesthetically sound with tremendous resources to bring rich art treasures to his country from all over the world.

ALINE SAARINEN
. . . more than a critic

The elder Morgan collected on a scale with the great figures in history, investing hundreds of millions of dollars in acquisitions that have stood the test of time and repeated critical judgment.

Others, like John G. Johnson, Charles Freer and John Quinn ranged from Flemish primitives through Oriental art (unappreciated at the time) to the discriminating purchase of contemporary works which have since also proved themselves.

Some of them only had millions to invest, while others were able to collect on a "Morganic" scale!

This book is a skilled sampling of the various eras and grades of American taste as the new world accumulated the leisure and the means to attempt to appreciate the best of the old world. Sometimes, or often, it seemed to mistake the vulgar worst for the best.

Any reader interested in the growth of culture should find this book a stimulating and amusing as well as informative work that will add to his understanding of contemporary standards of art and art appreciation.

* * *

Aline B. Saarinen, a native of Manhattan, is the wife of the distinguished architect Eero Saarinen, with whom she and their three-year-old son live in Bloomfield Hills, Mich.

A graduate of Vassar College, she has had a life-long interest in art and literature, originally aspiring to be a poet and becoming finally an influential art critic. Now associate art editor of The New York Times, she also writes widely on art for leading magazines in the country. She commutes to New York City once a month from her Michigan home.

FOR THE CHILDREN

PRIZE-WINNERS NOW IN PRINT

TWO CANADIAN WRITERS, Lucille Chaplan of Downsview, Ont., and Audrey McKim of Toronto had new books published simultaneously in Canada and the United States on March 18 as a result of the Little, Brown Canadian Children's Book Award competition, for the best manuscript of a children's book by a Canadian.

Both writers received honorable mention in the competition—won by Edith Lambert Sharp of Penticton, B.C., for her story Nkwala, which was published last summer. Lucille Chaplan for Elephant for Rent and Audrey McKim for Andy and the Gopher.

While Elephant for Rent is Lucille Chaplan's first published book, the Toronto-born author has been writing for many years. It all started when she was runner-up in a children's essay competition sponsored by a department store. Encouraged by her success she immediately asked her family for a typewriter for her next birthday, and "my fate was sealed."

Her stories and articles have appeared both under her own name and under a pseudonym in many Canadian publications including Mayfair, Saturday Night, Canadian Home Journal and Canadian Red Cross Junior.

Mrs. Chaplan's book, Elephant for Rent, tells the story of a small boy who was given an elephant for a birthday present, and of the adventures the pair had when they ran away to prevent a circus trainer from stealing the animal.

Mrs. Chaplan, her husband and two small children live in Downsview, a suburb of Toronto.

Edmonton-born Audrey McKim says that she first began to write when she first began to teach in Alberta's rural schools.

"There were so few books to read that I wrote for my own amusement," she recalls. Later she began a collection of stories, plays and poems for classroom use. Since then, in collaboration with Ena Hawken, another Edmontonian, she has produced six teacher "helps" for use in Alberta's junior grades.

Miss McKim taught for a number of years in the city of Edmonton itself, and for one year—on a teacher exchange—in Ottawa.

Her frist children's book, Here Comes Dirk, was published in 1951 and it was followed by Lexy O'Connor, in 1953.

When Alberta celebrated its golden jubilee in 1955, she was on the editorial advisory board of the Alberta Golden Jubilee Anthology, and, in addition wrote a pageant, "A Birthday Party for Alberta," which was produced in both public and separate schools.

Now living in Toronto, Miss McKim is the editor of World Friends, the children's missionary magazine published by the United Church of Canada. Her stories, articles and poems have appeared in a number of Canadian and American publications including Chatelaine, Jack and Jill, and Country Guide, and like Mrs. Chaplan, she is a frequent contributor to Canadian Red Cross Junior.

Her new book, Andy and the Gopher, draws on both her prairie experiences and her gift for light fantasy to tell of adventures which occurred one summer when an Irish leprechaum turned into a gopher, and became companion of a lonely Medicine Hat boy.